

THE JESUS PEOPLE

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The youth of America have been very restless in the last couple of decades. This restlessness developed into a wide chasm between the younger and older generation. This chasm is better known as the generation gap. The younger generation is understood in the context of acid, pot, hippies, rock festivals, campus violence, educational revolt, Vietnam, the draft, the government, the police, the radicals, the sexual revolution, and an impassioned quest for meaning and a place in life. It has become a generation with its own news media, its own philosophy, and its own language.¹

The "now" generation has been seeking for answers to problems of this world. They have sought for answers through marihuana, drugs, and religions. They have tried Buddhism, astrology, witchcraft, Eastern religions, and eclectic faiths in a hectic search for the answers to human failure.

Finally in desperation the youth began "turning on" to Jesus. Hippies and addicts were getting high on Christ instead of drugs. Their lives were changed by the

¹Marcus Bach, Strangers at the Door (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 162.

power of God and they, in simple faith, followed Jesus. What is this strange religion and exciting new phenomena that is happening to the youth of America?

This movement is called by such names as : "Jesus People", "Jesus Freaks", "Children of God", "The Jesus Revolution", "The Jesus Cause", "Jesus People's Army-Revolutionary Youth Movement", and "Street Christians". The term "The Jesus People" will be used in this paper because not all of the new converts have used drugs or dropped out of the straight society as some of the above names would indicate.

My last assignment was on the west coast where I served as a chaplain to basic trainees for almost three years. During that time I became increasingly aware of the Jesus Movement. One particular soldier stands out in my memory. His name was David and he was a "Jesus Freak". One morning I was in my office, when the Chaplains assistant came in and reported that a soldier was praying out loud and he was quite upset and crying. I walked into the chapel to see if I could be of some assistance to the young man. When I saw him kneeling in prayer, I hesitated about disturbing him and sat down beside him. After praying for some time he sat back in the pew. I introduced myself and asked him what seemed to be the trouble. At first, he wasn't too coherent, but finally he sobbed out his story. He told about how he had used pot, acid, and had become hooked on heroin. He was a drop out from society and

lived the life of an addict for almost three years wandering from place to place. It was during his aimless wanderings that he came in contact with a Jesus Commune. He was wonderfully and marvelously saved as he became a follower of Jesus.. His conversion happened six months before he was drafted into the Army. David tried to apply for a conscientious objector classification while in civilian life, but it was denied due to his shortly founded faith. He said that he struggled over the possibility of running away instead of coming into the Army, but wanted to do that which was right and most of all he wanted to do what God told him. He decided to let himself be drafted and apply for a 1-0 classification in the service.

David was just starting basic training and was quite upset about having to train. All he wanted to do was read his Bible, pray, and worship Jesus. He had been delivered from a horrible life of drug addiction and now he wanted to just praise his Savior.

David did go back to training, however he applied for the 1-0 classification with excellent character letters from his commander and other officers in his unit. His commander told me that David was a good soldier and was trustworthy and dependable. He thought that David was a very sincere religious person and the commander was hoping that this application for the 1-0 classification would be approved. The application came back disapproved.

David thought that this was too much and that he had done all he could to get out of the Army. Being discouraged about the whole process, he took matters into his own hands and went AWOL, Absent Without Leave.

There is a possibility that you as a chaplain might also run into "Jesus Freaks" like David. This paper is written so that you will be knowledgeable and able to better understand how to provide religious coverage for them.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND ORIGIN OF THE JESUS PEOPLE

Revolution means change and our world is changing so fast that many of us cannot keep up with it. Possible the most outstanding revolution now happening in America is what Time magazine calls "The Jesus Revolution". There are tens of thousands of American youth who are caught up in this movement. They are "turning on" to Jesus.² It is difficult to trace the origins and history of a rather spontaneous Jesus movement which does not have a clear beginning in time with one person or group. Its self-consciousness as a movement seemed to emerge gradually. However, there are several who claim to have begun the revolution.³

There were several ministries, which began independently in 1967 and early 1968, which lie behind the Jesus movement of today. The central figure in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco was Mr. Ted Wise. Deeply involved in addiction, Wise became a Christian in

²Billy Graham, The Jesus Generation (Grand Rapids, Mich. : Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), p. 9.

³Ronald M. Enroth, Edward E Ericson, Jr., C. Breckinridhe Peters, The Jesus People (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 12.

late 1966. After his conversion, he and his wife Elizabeth began talking to people on the streets of Haight-Ashbury about Jesus Christ. In late 1967 his group started a coffee house ministry in Haight-Ashbury. This ministry lasted for two years, during which time contact was made with thirty to fifty thousand young people.⁴

Arthur Blessitt, a Southern Baptist Evangelist, is known throughout America as, "The Minister of Sunset Strip". Arthur carried the Gospel nightly to the teen-jammed sidewalks of Sunset Strip. Sometimes on summer nights there were as many as 500 young people, hippies, bikers, junkies, teeny-boppers, and runaways, who wandered in for the handouts and listened to the music, testimonies, and Arthur's midnight sermons, or just to rap with one of the workers about hangups.⁵

There are some "hip" churches in the Jesus movement in spite of the fact that the Jesus People are disenchanted with the established church. They feel that the churches have lost significant contact with the Jesus of the New Testament, or at least have failed to communicate the Gospel, especially to the youth.⁶ One of the first and most widely publicized of these newbreed churches is Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa (actually located in

⁴Enroth, Ericson, Peters, p. 13.

⁵Edward E. Plowman, The Underground Church (Elgin, Ill.: David C. Cook Publishing Company, 1971), p. 46.

⁶Enroth, Ericson, Peters, p. 84.

Santa Ana, California). This church under the ministry of Rev. Charles Smith went from a dozen young people on a Wednesday night Bible study in 1969 to more than a thousand people by the summer of 1971. This same kind of phenomenal attendance is in evidence on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday nights as well, with the evenings devoted primarily to the spiritual feeding of young people. As many as 150 converts are added to the church weekly and about five hundred young people are baptized each month.⁷

Some of the soldiers that attended chapel services have told me of their conversion experience at Calvary Chapel. I have found them to be good supporters of the chapel program. I might say however, that not all "Jesus People" will come to a regular chapel service.

To better understand a soldier who has been in the Jesus movement would be to know the basic doctrines and teachings of his faith.

⁷Ibid., pp. 85,86.

CHAPTER III

BASIC DOCTRINES AND TEACHINGS OF THE MOVEMENT

Billy Graham says that while many of these young people are proclaiming that Jesus was "the first Hippie", the vast majority of them are genuine in their commitment. Most of the characteristics of the Jesus movement are good, but there are also some dangers.⁸

The Jesus movement, as its name implies, centers in Jesus as its leader. The Jesus People are trying to live Christ the way the Christian church once said He should be lived.⁹ They feel the present day church has deviated from the way the first church, in the Bible, was taught to live.

Broadly, what these young people share is a belief in the Bible and a stern view of morality: no drugs, no alcohol, no extramarital sex. They preach a 'conversion' experience followed by total commitment to the gospel in daily life. They see Jesus Christ not just as a historical or symbolic figure, but as a 'here and now' presence in their lives pending His imminent return to earth.¹⁰

⁸Graham, p. 16.

⁹Bach, p. 163.

¹⁰"The 'Jesus Movement': Impact on Youth, Church," U.S. News & World Report, March 20, 1972, LXXII, 60.

"The single most important teaching of the Jesus People is the simple gospel, Jesus saves."¹¹ This plan of salvation is offered as the solution to all problems. They try to follow the Bible Scriptures in whatever they do. They are almost exclusively experience-oriented in their conversion to Christ. When they talk about being "turned on" to Jesus, it is a counter-culture to an emotional experience that, for them, has striking similarity to the emotional experience induced by drugs.¹²

These young people are putting an emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Some of the texts quoted by them are: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord", Zechariah 4:6, and "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." I Thessalonians 1:5.

Another way of finding out more about the Jesus People is to be acquainted with their news media and music.

¹¹Enroth, Ericson, Peters, p. 161.

¹²Ibid., pp. 163, 164.

¹³Graham, p. 18.

CHAPTER IV

MEDIA OF THE MOVEMENT

The Jesus People keep in touch with their movement by the means of Jesus newspapers which advertise meetings, Bible studies, and coming events. A total of fifty newspapers have grown up around the country in the last few years. Hollywood Free Paper, Box 1891, Hollywood, Calif. 90028, is one of the first and largest and has a circulation in excess of 450,000 a month. Some of the other Jesus newspapers are: Agape - Seattle, Washington, which offers a list of 125 Christian communes or houses; Right On - Box 4309, Berkely, Calif., published by the Christian World Liberation Front; Truth - Post Office Box 3455, Spokane, Washington - has a circulation of 100,000; and Maranatha Press - 250 Center Street, New Milford, New Jersey.

Another media developed by the movement is their special kind of music. Marcus Bach writing about the music of the Jesus People exclaims,

What they did with 'Rock of Ages' and 'Lead Kindly Light'! How they lifted 'The Old Rugged Cross' and 'Were You There When They Crucified My Lord'! How they pulled out the stops with the scream of souped up guitars in their medleys of Pentecostal hymns!¹⁴

¹⁴Bach, Strangers at the Door, p. 156.

Larry Norman is perhaps the most effective, clever, and talented singer and composer in the movement.¹⁵ While Norman is the movement's musical figure, virtually every coffee house and church has its indigenous musical attraction. Guitar-playing and singing are as hip among the Jesus People as it is in the youth culture as a whole. Some of the best musicians are invited to the Jesus festivals.¹⁶

"Flooding the record market is 'Jesus Rock', a hallmark of the movement. Amazingly, a rock version of the old hymn, 'Amazing Grace' made the best-seller lists for a time.¹⁷

Bumper stickers announce: "Honk If You Love Jesus". Also there are "Jesus" lapel buttons, watches and do-it-yourself "billboards for Jesus".¹⁸ These are seen as ways and means of getting their message across to youth.

¹⁵Enroth, Ericson, Peters, p. 79.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 83

¹⁷"The 'Jesus Movement' : Impact on Youth, Church," U.S. News & World Report, March 20, 1972, LXXII, 57.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 60

CHAPTER V

ETHICAL PRACTICES AND ORGANIZATION

The results of this movement have been changed lives, often with almost radiant beauty, leading to a new puritanism of ethics within the freedom of multiple life-styles. "The participants stress the Ten Commandments and are strongly against promiscuity, greed, pride, drunkenness, drugs, debauchery, laziness, cigarettes, etc." ¹⁹

"The other side of experienced-oriented Christianity is the anti-intellectualism of the Jesus People. They take out of context such Bible passages as, "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" I Corin. 1:20, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise;" I Corin. 1:27, and "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit." Col. 2:8.²⁰ Education is of little value except as is necessary to prepare one to read the Bible.

The Jesus People view the church as a human institution and to them all human institutions are corrupt. Linda Meisssner, one of the leaders of Jesus People Army

¹⁹Walker L. Knight, Jesus People Come Alive (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971), p. 120.

²⁰Enroth, Ericson, Peters, p. 167.

in the Pacific Northwest, says this about churches,

We went to the hip-communes because we want love! We can't stand hatred, we have awakened, we have walked out of society, we have walked out of our homes, we are walking with Jesus.²¹

I would say that these ethical practices apply to the majority of the Jesus People, however, there are some groups that call themselves by the name but are rather loose in their morals.²²

The organization and structure of the Jesus People is very flexible. Infact there really is not a central religious leader except, Jesus. They have no national headquarters or any home office where a person could write to get more information. This movement is anti-institution, anti-church, and anti-education. Each group does its own thing as they interpret it from the Bible.

Some of the groups seem to follow the pentecostal teachings of tongues, healing, etc., while other groups reject these teachings. The leader or Bible teacher of each separate group seems to set the guidelines.

²¹Bach, Strangers At The Door, p. 167.

²²Graham, The Jesus Generation, p. 115.

CHAPTER VI

SERVING IN THE ARMED FORCES

The Jesus People are turned off to war as they believe it is not the solution. Jesus is the solution to all problems. Some of them could not envision Jesus bearing arms or serving in the service.

David, the soldier mentioned in the introduction, was also against serving in the Armed Forces. He came to this conclusion through study of the Scripture and the life of Christ portrayed there. Jesus preached, "love your enemies, do good to those who persecute you."²³ This helped to convince David that serving in the Army was wrong for him. He didn't know how he could serve Jesus while being a soldier.

There are, however, soldiers in the service who are from the Jesus Movement and they serve in combatant and noncombatant roles.

The group has no set rules regarding serving in the Armed Forces or bearing arms. This is left up to the conscience of each individual and his interpretation or the Scriptures.

²³Matthew 5:44.

CHAPTER VII

REQUIREMENTS OF CLERGYMEN

The Jesus People have no authorized schools or seminaries to train their religious leaders. There is, however, an attempt on the part of Hal Lindsey, author of The Late Great Planet Earth, to inaugurate a less structured two-year alternative to seminary in the fall of 1971. This 'biblical training school' is to involve small numbers on a full-time basis in a course designed to circumvent the normal three-year period of seminary training.²⁴ The reason for the school is to provide a more workable training for full-time Christian service than is now available. Lindsey sees the need for relying on more formal training rather than deferring to a supernatural transfer of knowledge from heaven directly to the soul.²⁵

In research for this paper, I could find no formal qualifications for the religious leaders except being born again and having a good knowledge of the Bible.

²⁴Enroth, Ericson, Peters, Jesus People, p. 139.

²⁵Ibid., p. 140.

CHAPTER VIII

THE JESUS PEOPLE SPEAK OUT

The following questions and answers have been compiled by Ruben Ortega in the book entitled, The Jesus People Speak Out. I have tried to select a good variety of questions so you, the reader, can see for your-selves what the Jesus People have to say on these different issues.

Question: What is the Jesus Movement?

Answer: "I really don't feel that I am a part of the Jesus Movement. When people say, 'the Jesus Movement,' it sounds like the Black Panther movement or just another movement that has come, and another movement that is going to go. If you take the word movement off and just leave the word Jesus on, then you have got something." Barry, Berkeley, Calif.

"I don't really believe that there is a Jesus Movement separate from the Body of Christ. It's a label given to Christians, especially those who are young." Howard, Alameda, Calif.

Question: What is the goal of the Jesus Movement concerning the United States?

Answer: "We want to see America change, although it seems hopeless at times. We believe in the last days that God will pour out his spirit on all mankind. I believe it is beginning. People say that the Jesus Movement is a fad; I don't believe it. Maybe some of it is and some of it isn't, but our main goals are to see America change - cities change - and we have seen cities change. We believe that when the revival comes, cities change and countries change." Dan, Los Angeles, California

Question: Is the Jesus Movement growing or dissolving?

Answer: "The Movement will never dissolve." Dennis,
Turlock, Calif.

"I believe the Jesus Movement is dissolving. There was a tremendous revival, and a lot of people jumped in. And God is expecting people now to follow on in what they know; there's not all the fun and the excitement any more. A lot of people are falling away. A lot of people are falling into heresy; there's all kinds of junk going." C.G. Mill Valley, Calif.

Question: Would you use the phrase, "Getting high on Jesus"?

Answer: "I wouldn't use that word 'high'. You talk to somebody and you say, 'Why don't you get high on Jesus?' and they'll think it's something like dope or something. There's been times I've been 'low' on Jesus." Carol,
San Francisco

I don't like using that term anymore because it isn't a high. It's a reality, the reality of Jesus with man. It's peace inside of you! Joel, Hillsborough, Calif.

Question: Are there individuals or groups within the Jesus Movement who are causing problems?

Answer: "There are supposedly a group around New York of Jesus Freaks, and around Big Sur who call themselves Jesus Freaks, but are actually witchcraft." Danny, Redwood City, Calif.

"I've heard of one, the Children of God around here. I don't know what they're really like. There's another one up in Santa Cruz. I don't know the exact name of them, but they're walking around as Jesus People, and you talk to them and they've got hatred in their hearts. You can see it in the whole group."
Gary, San Francisco, Calif.

Question: What would you do if the Jesus Movement were to dissolve?

Answer: "I don't depend on the Jesus Movement. In a sense, I don't feel that I have anything to do with it, really. My life isn't depending on what everyone else does, but what God wants me to do." Debbie, San Jose, California.

"If the movement ever were to dissolve I don't believe that would affect my walk with the Lord. It's kind of like, if everyone left in the whole world abandoned God, it wouldn't have any effect on me, because the relationship is with a living God and not a relationship with a movement."

Sheila, Santa Barbara, Calif.

Question: What do Jesus People feel about the established Church?

Answer: "Jesus called the established church the synagogue of Satan. They are not of God. Because I went to church all my life and I never met Jesus. And I've been to many churches all over the country, and they weren't Christ-like at all." Cornelius, Dallas, Texas

". . . . the institutionalized church, in my eyes, is something completely different from the church, the Body of Christ. I think the institutionalized church is much like a government, a world system government. The institutionalized church today seems to be continuously going downhill and the decisions and resolutions that they're coming up with prove all the more their state of corruption."

Doug, Richmond, California

Question: How do you define love?

Answer: "I believe that the love is completely opposite from the love of the world between man and a woman. It starts in the spirit and then it goes into the soulish realm and then into the physical realm." Kathy, Berkeley, Calif.

"You should express yourself with respect towards a girl that you love. You should be completely, wholeheartedly honest with yourself; and know that you really love that girl for who she is, and what she is."

C.G. , Mill Valley, Calif.

Question: Do you feel premarital sex is right, or not right?

Answer: "I feel you really shouldn't get too physical because you aren't married. You know, and if something comes along you might not be able to support both of them." Richard, Turlock, Calif.

"I used to dig it but I know it's the false truth of the world. And you see so many young

mothers walking around with kids, without fathers. You can look and see that V.D. is an epidemic and it's just not right-on, it never was." Gary, San Francisco, Calif.

Question: Should a Christian drop out?

Answer: "No; I think Christ never gave a command to drop out of anything. I think He said, 'Do the best you can with what is given to you; and nothing is given to a man unless it is given by God;' and I think that that clearly states what we're supposed to do as Christians." Kyle, Berkely, Calif.

"I feel that a Christian should be involved in political action in the way of voting, being involved in military service, and being against whatever is against God. I don't think they have to be out parading with signs, or chasing around in riots, or whatever." Amy, SanMartin, California

Question: Do you believe in War in general?

Answer: "I don't feel that any war is right. I don't think that there is a moral or just war." Chuck, Mississippi

"To prevent wars we should seek the Lord and ask what He wants for our life." Steve, Mountain View, Calif.

Question: How do you feel about living in communes?

Answer: "I don't know what the Socialists are but the Bible talks about communal living as it's called; living together, sharing all the things that you have. This is the way the Bible preaches it. This is the way they told you to live from Adam right on down to the book of Revelation." Maoch, Southern California

"I know that we have been accused of being communists. I believe it is somewhat because everybody is on a sharing basis and it is a communal-type living trip. But I believe we depend very much on the free enterprise system." Joe, San Leandro, California

Question: What about Christian Schools, Bible Colleges, and seminaries --- do you approve?

Answer: "It is important for Christians to be grounded and taught in the Word of God, and not

just any doctrine. I think Bible colleges are really good. Debbie, Campbell, Calif.

"You can take your theology and your doctrine, and you can throw it out the window. I don't want to be bothered with it, if it's not in the Bible as it's printed. I don't need no man's interpretation of the Bible for me."

Newton, San Francisco, Calif.

Question: Do you think Jesus is coming again soon?

Answer: "Very shortly, I think we are in the last days."
Kyle, Berkeley, California

"I believe Christ will return in this generation."
Dennis, Whittier, Calif.²⁶

²⁶Ruben Ortega, The Jesus People Speak Out
(New York, N.Y.:David C. Cook Publishing Company, 1972),.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The Jesus People are carefree, vivacious, enthusiastic, simple, Bible believing, Christians who follow Jesus. Their symbol is an upraised index finger showing the "one way" to Christ.

Some of the things a chaplain should contemplate when creating worship services that involve young adults are: (1) maintain an open and uncritical attitude towards them. (2) be flexible enough to allow joy and celebration to be expressed in new forms of worship. (3) allow young adults to take part in the service. (4) provide Bible Study that is informal, positive, and if possible led by a young person. (5) schedule special services for them on Sunday or other nights. (6) allow the free sharing of experiences and testimonies.

Services for young adults should be informal, and include folk singing with guitars, a praise time for testimonies and a plain message from the New Testament.

Most of the Jesus People that I have known have been honest, sincere, and zealous for their Lord. They have been more of an asset than a hinderance to the chapel program.

I would like to recommend the book, "The Jesus People", by Enroth, Ericson, and Peters, as an excellent, up to date, unbiased account of the Jesus Movement.

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